

# TENNESSEE GREEN STAR PARTNERSHIP MEMBER HIGHLIGHT



Bates Rubber, Inc. – Lobelville, TN



By: Vaughn Cassidy

Bates Rubber, Inc. is a subsidiary of ParkOhio, an Ohio-headquartered company that operates more than 125 manufacturing sites and supply chain logistics facilities worldwide, through three reportable segments: supply technologies, engineered products, and assembly components. Bates Rubber in Lobelville is a manufacturer of nylon and plastic tubing and tubing assemblies for the domestic and international automotive markets. Processes include extrusion, trimming, forming, testing, assembly and packaging. The company was founded in 1974 by Mike Bates in his garage in Lobelville. All of the company patents are still held by Bates Rubber.

"The annual production at the plant is roughly 50 million units which averages out to be 11,000 per day of products," said Pam McDaniel, General Manager of Bates Rubber, Inc. The company is a Tier I and Tier II supplier for several major auto manufacturers including Chrysler, Ford, Honda, General Motors and Nissan. They also supply parts to MAHLE, General Motors and Nissan which are all fellow Tennessee Green Star Partners.

Bates Rubber, Inc. originally manufactured rubber automotive components, and even though the brand retains the term "rubber", the Lobelville facilities have since shifted to exclusively manufacturing nylon and plastic components. Part of the advantage of shifting from rubber to nylon and plastic components manufacturing is that nylon and plastics are more easily recycled and reconstituted. "In the past we used recycling vendors for all of our plastic trim wastes," said McDaniel, "In 2018, we purchased a grinder and dust collection system, which gives us the ability to grind our nylon and plastic scraps." The recycling program is the strongest environmental success for Bates Rubber, Inc. The facility recycles over 95% of their scrap plastic that comes from the trimming process. Up to 20% of that recycled plastic can then be reintroduced back into the products. Vendors such as SEB Recycling and Dale's Recycling are still important partners for Bates Rubber, Inc. for recycling shrink wrap, cardboard and scrap metals.

Another important element of environmental responsibility besides recycling is the reduction and elimination of wastes and air emissions. Through process improvements, which reduced volatile air emissions associated with adhesives and gluing processes by 90%, Bates Rubber Inc. was able to reduce the need for two air pollution permits with TDEC.

## FEATURED THIS MONTH:

- Established in TN in 1974
- Employs 190
- Member since 2019

## INTERESTING FACTS

- Newest Green Star Partner
- Recycles 95% of production wastes
- Reduced over 90% of hazardous waste



Beyond pursuing pollution prevention, Bates Rubber, Inc. also conducts training and education for employees, who are taught about the overall health and environmental impacts of eliminating solvents and other chemicals. Bates Rubber, Inc. communicates their environmental system to all employees. New employees learn that Bates Rubber, Inc. meets all OEM environmental sustainability criteria by being an ISO 14001 certified facility.

Bates Rubber recently took advantage of a free program from their local [Industrial Assessment Center](#). Industrial Assessment Centers, through the Department of Energy, offer a comprehensive assessment of energy use by a local university and then compiles an extensive report that suggests changes and upgrades to become more efficient. In the case of Bates Rubber, their assessment was conducted by Tennessee Tech University. "The students and Dr. Cunningham are the experts in finding ways for Bates to save on energy costs," said Pam McDaniel. "Our first two projects will be lighting upgrades and air compressors," said McDaniel. To qualify for the free assessment through the program, an industry must meet certain qualifications or request an exemption, then complete a pre-audit questionnaire.

Lobelville, Tennessee is a small town of less than 1,000 people in a rural portion of the state. Given the size of Lobelville, Bates Rubber, Inc.'s community engagement efforts are important; employees are very involved in the community. Bates Rubber, Inc. sponsors a spring cook out for their employees, vendors, and local government officials. Bates also sponsors the elementary school, a local ball field, serves as the main location for the Christmas parade and participates in the annual "Trunk or Treat" event at Halloween. When Bates Rubber decided to clean up the exterior of the facility and recycle the materials, the people of Lobelville pitched in to help. This improved the appearance of the facility and improved the stormwater impact of the property.

As a Tennessee Green Star Partner, Bates Rubber, Inc. has been invited to participate in the Tennessee Materials Marketplace. The [Tennessee Materials Marketplace](#) is a collaboration between industries, facilitated by an interactive online materials exchange, to recycle, repurpose, and return material discards back to Tennessee's economy.



***A plan for true sustainability requires not only good global citizenship, but that we be competitive and remain so in the long term. True social responsibility is not an obstacle but an enabler to this end.***

Park Ohio Assembly Components Group Mission Statement

The [Tennessee Green Star Partnership](#) is a voluntary environmental leadership program designed to recognize industries in the state that are committed to sustainable practices. If you are interested in joining MAHLE of Morristown and other sustainable industries in Tennessee by becoming a member, please contact us.